

على حب



ON LOVE

Notes for a talk given by:
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وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ • ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ

wa huwa-l-ghafūru-l-wadūd – dhū-l-‘arshi-l-majīd

He is the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Loving,
Lord of the Throne of Glory

(Sūratu-l-Burūj 86:14-15)

“Nothing contains My Glory, My Lights, My Manifestations except the heart of the believer, for nothing *can* contain me but the heart of the believer.” (Ḥadīth Qudsī)

قلب المؤمن بيت الرب

qalba-l-mumin baytu-r-rabb

The heart of the believer is the house of Allāh.

(Ḥadīth)



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بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ ؕ

wa-lladhīna °amanū °ashaddu ḥubbal-lillāh

But those of Faith are overflowing in their love for Allāh.

(Sūrah Baqarah 2:165)

﴿﴾
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

°in kuñtum tuḥibbūna-llāha fa°ittabi°unī

yuḥbibkumu-llāhu wa-yaghfir lakum ḍhunūbakum

“If you love Allāh, follow me,

Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins.”

(Sūrah °Al °Imrān 3:31)

﴿﴾
فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

fa-sawfa ya°ti-llāhu bi-qawmiñy-yuḥibbuhum wa yuḥibbūnahu

Allāh will bring forward a people
whom He loves and who love Him.

(Sūratu-l-Māa°idah 5:54)

﴿﴾
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

°inna-lladhīna °amanū wa °amilu-ṣ-ṣāliḥāti

sayaj°alu lahumu-r-raḥmanu wuddā

Surely, those who believe and perform good deeds,
the Universally Merciful will shower them with love.

(Sūrah Maryam 19:96)

﴿﴾
أَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي

°alqaytu °alayka maḥabbatan minnī wa lituṣna°a °ala °aynī

I have cast my love on you, that you may be formed under my eye.

(Sūrah Ṭā Hā 20:39)



إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ؕ

°innaka lā tahdī man aḥbabta wa lakinna-llāha yahdī mañy-yashāa°

Surely you cannot guide whom you love,
but Allāh guides whom He pleases.

(Sūrah Qaṣās 28:56)



وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا
لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ؕ
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

wa min °āyātihi añ kḥalaqa-lakum miñ °anfusikum azwajal-li-
taskunū °ilayhā wa ja°ala baynakum mawaddatan wa rahmah;
°inna fī dḥalika lāa°ayātil-li-qawmiñy-yatafakkarūn

And of His signs is this: He created for you mates from yourselves
that you might find tranquillity in them,
and He made love and mercy between you.
Truly in this are signs for people who reflect.

(Sūratu-r-Rūm 30:21)



In the beginning of this talk I have, as is usual, given a few examples from the Qur°ān of how Allāh ﷻ has referred to Love. I say as usual as we must always start all of our discourse with the Word of Allāh ﷻ as everything proceeds from what Allāh ﷻ says,

Allāh ﷻ uses several words in the Qur°ān that carry the meaning of “love”, all with subtle different shades of meaning. If we count all these words such as *rafah* (رفه), *rahmah* (رحمة), *wadda* (ود), *ḥabb* (حب), etc. which all can be translated as “love”, we find that *love* appears on the average about once in every 15 °āyāt (verses).

The word *ḥabb*, which is most usually and directly translated as love, itself occurs sixty-nine times. Indeed the word *love* in its different forms occurs so frequently in the Qur°ān that it can hardly be said, as many critics of °Islam are apt to do, that °Islām emphasizes only the greatness (*kubr*/كبر) of Allāh ﷻ, and not His love.

W. Chittick writes in an essay “*On the Shining Light of Love*”: “Among the many mentions of love in the Qurʾān, the favorite verse of the advocates of love is: “He loves them, and they love Him.”

يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

yuḥibbuhum wa yuḥibbūnahu

(Sūratu-l-Māʾidah 5:54)

“This verse puts the ʾIslāmīc worldview in a nutshell: Allāh brought the universe into existence because of His love for human beings. Human beings fulfill their calling by loving Allāh.

“The radiance of love’s eternal light gives rise to the universe. The goal of love is to overcome separation, to bridge gaps, to bring the two lovers together as one. If love is to do its work, people must recognize the light and love it in return.

“‘He loves them’ brought them into existence. Their recognition of the light feeds ‘they love Him.’ Once love intervenes, form and appetite lose their luster.

“The final goal of lovers is to join the shining light at its source. The power that works this transformation is love. One of the many Quranic names of Allāh is “friend” (*wali*), an Arabic word that combines the senses of “lover” and “helper.” Both meanings can be seen in the verse,”

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

Allāhu walīyyu-l-ladhīna ʾamanū;

yukhrijuhum mina-ḍḥ-ḍḥulumati ila-n-nūr

Allāh is the friend of those who have faith. He brings them out of the darkness into the light.”

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:257)

In a khutbah given in al-Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Oh Allāh make me love You, make me love those who love You, make me love all things that bring me closer to loving You. Oh Allāh, make me love You, and Your angels, and Your prophets, and all of Your creation. Oh Allāh, make my love for You dearer to me than myself, and my family, and my wealth, and my children, and cool, pure water to the thirsty. Love that which Allāh loves! Love Allah with all your hearts!”

“Grow not weary of hearing the Word of Allāh. Do not stop remembering Him. Do not let your hearts grow hard toward Him. Truly Allāh has preferred His Book above all of Creation. Indeed, Allāh has endowed it with guidance to the best of deeds, and made it an example for the elect of His servants, and filled it with righteous discourse, and made clear in it what is lawful and unlawful for you.”
When we look closely at the Qur’ān we find that Allāh has clarified whom it is He loves —



“Allāh loves those who work goodness.”

(2:195)

“Allāh loves those who turn in repentance.”

(2:222)

“Allāh loves those who are conscious of Him.”

(3:76)

“Allāh loves those who are patient.”

(3:146)

“Allāh loves those who are just.”

(5:42)

“Allāh loves those who purify themselves.”

(9:108)

“Allāh loves the just.”

(49:9)

“Allāh loves those who struggle in His Way.”

(61:4)



and those whom He does not love —

“Allāh does not love the aggressors.”

(2:190)

“Allāh does not love corruption.”

(2:205)

“Allāh does not love the ungrateful.”

(2:276)

“Allāh does not love those who hide the Truth.”

(3:32)

“Allāh does not love the oppressors.”

(3:140)

“Allāh does not love the proud and boastful.”

(4:36)

“Allāh does not love the traitors.”

(4:107)

“Allāh does not love those who corrupt.”

(5:64)

“Allāh does not love the transgressors”

(5:87)

“Allāh does not love the prodigal and profligate.”

(6:141)

“Allāh does not love the treacherous.”

(8:58)

“Allāh does not love those that exult.”

(28:76)

“He does not love the unbelievers.”

(30:45)



A careful reading of this list and the ʾāyāt which proceed this list will give one a fairly clear understanding of most of that which falls within the purview of the the subject of love from the point of view of Allāh ﷻ. It is of course not exhaustive but with, as I say, a careful reading and consideration it is possible to come to at least the general outlines of love from the perspective of Allāh ﷻ in accord with that which He has said concerning. Those wishing to read more about this I would refer them to my earlier essay on the *Love of Allāh* published in 1417/1996 by Noon Hierographers.

In the above examples the words that are translated as “Love” are all derived, specifically, from the root Ḥa Ba Ba which means: love, affection, effacement. It also has another meaning as a noun, which is *seed*. Implicit within that meaning is the development of the seed into a mature plant. Those who have deeply concerned themselves with the clarification and definition of the degrees and levels of this ‘love’ through direct experience have enumerated certain distinct and precise phases in the progression from affection to that annihilation of which ash-Shiblī, رحمه الله, said:

“Love is a fire,
which once kindled in the heart,
consumes everything
but the Beloved.”

When we speak of the Beloved we speak first of all of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ who, among other names, is known as *ḥabību-llāh* (حبيب الله) or the Beloved of Allāh ﷻ.

Sidi Munīr Qadiri Boutchichi of the Qadiri Boutchich remarks, “The souls of the knowledgeable are lost in the oceans of love for the most perfect of the creatures of Allāh ﷻ, His beloved, the sublime model of all perfection, our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Their thirst has only increased and they continue to rise up the scale of love, each at his station and according to his aspiration.

“The immense joy that invades our hearts and souls on this blessed occasion is a sign of our love for the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. This is a celebration of every instant. It is no fleeting celebration; the mere repetition of a popular tradition or social ceremony. This celebration and this durable and continuous joy are linked to the great and noble place that our beloved Prophet ﷺ deserves. Allāh ﷻ graced him with His proximity and qualified him as a mercy for all humanity. Allāh ﷻ attributed His beloved Prophet ﷺ with such an incomparable dignity, an eminent degree of which only the Creator ﷻ could know the reality, along with those that Allāh ﷻ has chosen and drawn towards Him amongst all of the pure, the knowledgeable, the Gnostic and realised beings; those worthy of His love, of His proximity and of His presence; those who have filled the eyes of their hearts with Muḥammadan lights and who are extinguished in his love coming from their ardent desire.

“*Mahabba* (love) is a precious goal and a noble station that only the most sincere amongst the chosen servants of Allāh ﷻ can attain. In ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ says, “Nobody has experienced faith until he loves me more than his children, his parents and everybody else.”

“The love for the Prophet ﷺ that his companions رضي held for him finds its continuation in Ṣūfism (*taṣawwūf*/تصوّف), which is the school of love: for Allāh ﷻ and for His Messenger ﷺ. We can find many examples of this love in the books, poems and qasā'id, which stem directly from this station of *Mahabba*. This [light] that pure, healthy and divine hearts have transmitted from generation to generation... heals the illness of the heart and revives them,

“This Muḥammadan light pulls the soul (*nafs*/النفس) out of unconsciousness and teaches it to love.

“The spiritual education of the heart is the teaching of the love for Allāh ﷻ and for His Messenger ﷺ; the submission to his guidance and the inspiration of his ﷺ noble characteristics.

“The love of the Prophet ﷺ is one of the obligations of our dīn (way of life) as one’s faith is not complete without it. It is a love which perfects the respect of the Sunnah (Prophetic example) and engenders the love of all those who love the Prophet ﷺ, his descendants and his companions.” For this Allāh ﷻ ordered him:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ
وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

qul in kuñtum tuḥibbūna-llāha fa-°ittabi°unī yuḥbibkumu-llāhu
wa yaghfir lakum dhunūbakum wa-llāhu ḡhafūrun raḥīm

Say: If you love Allāh, follow me; Allāh will love you
and forgive you your sins and Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.

(Sūrah °Āl °Imrān 3:31)

and further

مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

mañy-yuṭi°i-r-rasūla fa-qadā °āṭā°a-llāh

Who ever obeys the Messenger obeys Allāh

(Sūratu-n-Nisā°a 4:80)

And in the same context the Messenger ﷺ said,

“If you love Allah ﷻ, obey me”

So the circle comes round. Love of Allāh ﷻ, love of the Rasūl ﷺ, love of the Rasūl ﷺ love of Allāh ﷻ, obedience to Allāh, obedience to the Rasūl ﷺ, obedience to the Rasūl ﷺ, obedience to Allāh ﷻ.



لَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى النُّورِ الْمُبِينِ،
عَبْدِكَ وَحَبِيبِكَ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ الْأَمِينِ،
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَحَقَّقْنَا بِحَبِّهِ،
وَأَكْرَمْنَا بِقُرْبِهِ، وَاجْعَلْنَا مِنْ رُفَقَائِهِ يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

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allāhumma ṣalli wa sallim wa bārik °ala-n-nūrī-l-mubīn °abdika
wa ḥabībika sayyidinā muḥammadil-l-°āmīn wa °ala ālihi wa
ṣaḥbihi wa ḥaqiqnā bi-ḥubbihi wa °akrimnā bi-qurbihi
wa-j°alnā mir-rufaḳā°ihi yā rabba-l-°ālamīn.

“Oh Allāh send prayers, peace and blessings upon the Clear Light,
Your Slave and Your Beloved,
our Master Muḥammad the Trustworthy,
as well as his family and companions, and make us true in his love,
honor us with nearness to him, and include us among his comrades.
Oh Lord of the Worlds.”

﴿﴾
اَنَا حَبِيبُ اللَّهِ وَلَا فَخْرَ

ana ḥabību-llāhi wa lā fakra

“I am the beloved of Allah and I don’t say it by way of pride.”



as we mentioned earlier in the next °āyāt this station is open to all:

إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ

°in kuñtum tuhibbūna-llāha fa°ittabi°unī yuḥbibkumu-llāhu

“If you love Allāh, follow me, Allāh will love you.”

(Sūrah °Āl °Imrān 3:31)



پردہ بہ پردہ ہے نہاں پردہ نشیں کا راز عشق

parda ba parda heh nihah, pardah nashin ka raaze ishq
Love has curtains that cannot be penetrated by the outsiders;
Only those behind the curtains know this secret talk of love.



أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ

°alam nashrah laka ṣadārak

have We not opened your heart?

(Sūratu-ash-Ṣharḥ 94:1)

وَلَسَوْفَ يَغْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ

wa-la-sawfa yu^ctika rabbuka fa tarḍa

Your Lord will soon give you favors and you will be satisfied.
(Sūratu-ḍ-Ḍuḥā 93:5)

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ

an-nabiyyu ^oawlā bi-l-mu^ominīna min aⁿfusihi

The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves
(Sūratu-l-Aḥzāb 33:6)

Slowly we are beginning to come closer to the essence of this talk/essay on Love. When we quote the ^oāyat, “If you love Allāh, follow me, Allāh will love you.” (3:31) we are pointing to a secret — a secret which is open but none the less secret — which is the secret of how to arrive at the state and station of Love.

In a Hadith Qudsi, Allāh ﷻ says:

ما وسعني سمائي ولا أرضي ولكن وسعني قلب عبدي المؤمن

mā wasi^canī samā^oī wa lā ^oarḍī
wa lakin wasi^canī qalbi ^cabdi-l-mu^omin

“My Earth could not contain Me, nor My heavens,
but the heart of My believing servant contained Me.”

That means, “Nothing contained My Glory, My Lights, My Manifestations except the heart of the believer. The hearts of the believers contain Me.” Allāh ﷻ is saying, “You cannot have any other thing where I am contained.” You cannot have two things contained in your heart, only one. Allāh ﷻ says in Ḥadīth Qudsi, “Nothing contains Me but the heart of the believer.”

قلب المومن بيت الرب

qalba al-mumin bayt ar-rabb.

The heart of the believer is the house of the Lord.
(Ḥadīth)

This is a very important point which must be reached in understanding the different dimensions of love and how the heart of the believer must be transformed and transmuted to be a fit container.

A light may be entirely concealed within a room that has no opening to the outside. However, if a door or window is opened, the light shines forth; if the room is filled with light, light will come out. However if it is filled with smoke, smoke will come out, or if is filled with filth then filth will come out.

This transmutation or transformation is evident for instance in this ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ where he states:

حَبِّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ النِّسَاءُ وَالطِّيبُ ،
وَجَعَلْتُ قُرَّةَ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ

“Two things of your world were made lovely to me,
— perfume and women —
and the coolness of my eyes is in prayer.”

When the Prophet ﷺ said he loved women in this instance – it means that, above all, he loved the principal quality which women possess – *rahmah* or universally unconditional merciful love not to say he didn’t also love his wives in other ways, but that this quality of *rahmah*, that especially the mother has, made women especially beloved to him ﷺ as women too were a form of *dhikr* of Allāh ﷻ Who *is* truly the Universally Merciful and Singularly Compassionate.

Indeed he ﷺ said, “Paradise lies at the feet of the Mothers.” and when asked who is the most deserving of our affectionate company, he replied thrice, “Your Mother, Your Mother, Your Mother and then your Father.”

When further asked why he gave the mother three degrees of preference over the father, he replied: “Your mother carried you for nine months in her blessed womb, then painfully gave birth to you. After that she gave up her sleep for you, suckled you, carried you in her arms for three years and cleaned up after you. She did your laundry. She cooked and served your food for eighteen years and as you aged she still followed your progress with great interest.” The man enquired; ‘Oh Prophet, suppose I carry my mother on my back for years, clean up after her, cook for her and feed her. Suppose I attend to those same services as long as she may live?’ The Prophet replied; ‘There will be this one difference between you. Your mother looked out for you to live, while you are waiting for her to die.’”

So when we talk about love it is above all this form or level of love, rather than the more worldly or even profane types of love which exist. Though we do not deny the existence of other forms of love, still we differentiate between the levels, and value and treasure certain forms of love more highly than others in so far as they mirror and reflect back to us the love of Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ and are, in that way, a form a dhikr of Allāh.

It is a matter of rising in love rather than falling in love, even though it seems that falling in love is what the world seems to treasure and is the stuff of songs, stories, movies and novels.

This is an extremely important point to consider in both the contemplation and experience of love. “Does this love I feel bring me closer to Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ or closer to the dunya?”

When considering love for the “other” we must first look at where love between two people begins.

Traditionally it is said that love begins with compatibility or *ʿittifāq* (اتفاقات) which has its roots in *wafīqa* which has numerous levels of meaning in Arabic. At the most outer level it means suitable, fit, consistent, proper. The next layer of *ʿittifāq* yields meaning along the lines of reconciliation, to bring into agreement, make peace between, harmonize, balance; at another level of meaning, there are shades of agreement, consent, confirmation and approval and still deeper within is the understanding that success or assistance or prosperity is a result of the favor of Allāh ﷻ. This is the underlying basis and foundation upon which further stages of love rest.

It appears as such in two forms within the Qurʾān. In the first instance it appears in Sūratu-n-Nisāʾa in the context of settling disputes between men and women: “And if you fear a breach between the two then appoint a wise one (*ḥakamā*/حكما) from among his family and a wise one from among hers. If they desire reconciliation Allāh will make them of one mind (*yuwaffiqi*/يوفق) for truly Allāh ﷻ is all-Knowing, Aware.”

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ
وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا

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wa °in ḳhif̣tum shiqāqa baynihimā fa-°ib°athū ḥakamam-min °ahlihi
wa ḥakamam-min ahlihā in yurīda °iṣlāhan
yuwaffiqi-llāhu baynahumā
(Sūratu-n-Nisā°a 4:35)

It appears in another instance where the people of Madyan are berating the Prophet Shu°ayb ؑ, who has been sent to them by Allāh ﷻ to reform them and reconcile them to the Way of Allāh and he replies to them saying,

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي
وَرَزَقْنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ؕ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَن أُخَالِفَكُم إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَآكُمْ عَنْهُ ؕ
إِن أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ؕ
وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

qāla yā qawmi °arā°ytum iñ kuntu °alā bayyinatīn mir-rabbī
wa razaqānī minhu rizqan ḥasanā;
wa ma °urīdu °an °ukḥālīfakum°ila mā °anhākum °anh;
in °urīdu °illa-l-°iṣlāḥa mā °istaṭa°tu wa mā tawfiqī °illā bi-llāh;
°alayhi tawakkaltu wa-°ilayhi °unībā

He said, 'My people! What do you think?
If I do possess a Clear Sign from my Lord
and He has given me His good provision,
I would clearly not want to go behind your backs
and do something I have forbidden you to do.
I only want to put things right as far as I can.
My success is with Allāh alone.
I have put my trust in Him and I turn to Him.

(Sūrah Hūd 11:88)

Thus all of the bright etheric and shining esoteric personalities among the Ṣufīs held that the very first step in the path of Love was the self attaining to the stage (*maqām*) of compatibility (°ittifāq) which meant bringing the self (*nafs*) into accord (*wifāq*) with the Way set out by Allāh and harmonizing (*tawfiq*) the self with what is Written. Only through doing this could one hope to enter the path that held the promise of success and congruence (*tawfiq*) in the end.

Further the Şufis held, as in truth do all orthopractic and traditional Muslims, that the perfect, and only, means of reaching this stage was conformity (*wifāq*) to, and adoption (*tawfiq*) of, the Divinely Revealed Law (*ash-shari'ah*) as demonstrated in practice (*sunnah*) by the Last Prophet and Seal of the Messengers, Muḥammad ﷺ.

The outcome and the first sign of success (*tawfiq*) on the Way is a certain intimacy (*ʿulfah*/ألفة) which is the natural outgrowth of reaching accord, submitting and accommodating oneself with, and to, the Divine Law. We emphasize here the importance of this step along the path of love both of Allāh ﷻ and the 'significant' other.

When we, and those who have preceded us, speak of intimacy or concord with Allāh ﷻ, we are speaking of a very early stage of intimacy for which concord is perhaps a better rendition of the meaning, though both are accurate, as also are affection, congeniality and friendship. It is the station which a great number of pious Muslims, many of them quite simple souls, reach and it is a place of deep satisfaction, quiet contentment and a kind of effortless harmony and limpid grace. *ʿUlfah* carries with it a feeling that, as one has accepted Allāh ﷻ, so one is accepted by Allāh ﷻ. *ʿUlfah* reflects a picture of a world at peace (even though wars may be raging around one); a world which is whole and seamless. It is a world in which there is time. Time to live, time to breathe, time for children, time for family, time for friends, time to create, time for beauty, time to love, time to worship, time to do nothing but spend some time in the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ (*dhikru-llāh*) and time to grow old and time to die amongst friends and family, kith and kin.

The world of *ʿulfah* is in truth a dimension that not too long ago vast numbers of the believers across the world dwelt within, though everywhere today it is under attack, and, like all 'natural' habitats, it is being ravaged and raped. In reality the 'modern' ecological crisis is but the outer reflection of a much deeper malaise which has to do with the destruction of the 'traditional' world itself, which of necessity is always firmly integrated with the changing rhythms and unfolding exigencies of life upon earth; a world, as such, which is rooted in the Divinely Revealed Principles and Laws upon which that world is constructed, least not, the world of love.

Only those who submit and surrender (*ʾislām*) will ever divine an inkling of this concord (*iʾtilāf*) with what Is, Being Itself. It is the true state of *ʾIslām* and the real *ʾIslāmīc* state which the modern ideologues and ideologies will never, and can never, reach. It is the state of safety, well being, security (*amānah*) and peace (*salām*) built on complete concord with Allāh ﷻ and carrying out the Orders incumbent on us as human beings. Everything has its price and the price of peace (*salām*) is surrender (*ʾislām*).

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ ۖ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ

qīla ʾudkhuli-l-jannah; qāla yā layta qawmī yaʿlamūn

“It was said to him. Enter the Garden.

He said, “Would that my people knew.”

(Sūrah Yā Sīn 36:26)



You may think on reading or hearing this that we have strayed far from the subject of love or Love but I assure you that here we are speaking of the very basis of both love and Love – that is both the worldly love of the ‘other’ and the Divine Love of the Creator ﷻ.

It is admittedly difficult in the sexually charged world in which we live to connect to this understanding of love that is not a kind of frenetic excitement on the worldly plane or intense drunkenness and intoxication on the spiritual plane. Such is the world in which we live that it would seem that only love that is predicated on a kind of tightly stretched and highly wound emotion is even considered to be *true* love whereas in what may be considered to be an older and more slowly moving world, love is something deep and made to be savored – a kind of fathomless satisfaction, quiet contentment, effortless harmony and limpid grace. A world of intimacy and concord. A world of reconciliation, peace, harmony, balance colored by subtle shades of agreement, consent, and confirmation.

From this perspective consider what it means to be loved (*ḥabīb*) by Allāh ﷻ – to be the friend (*walī*) of Allāh ﷻ – to be the lover (*ʿāshiq/عاشق*) of Allāh ﷻ.

From our perspective this is the beginning – by no means the end – of love for, in truth, love has no end but it does have a beginning.

In one sense each level of love emerges from out of the preceding level rather in the way that one peels an onion or, to use another metaphor, the stages of love are rungs on a ladder which is climbed, often with great effort and sometimes with amazing ease, suffused by a wholly free and effortless grant (*minān*) from Allāh ﷻ.

Intimacy and concord, affection and congeniality, give rise to a sense of attachment (*ta'allūq*/تعلق) – a subtle kind of cherishing or treasuring be it of Allāh ﷻ or the worldly other.

At this stage the lover is granted a sip (or more) of the pure ‘taste’ (*dhāwq*/ذائق) of love. Our shaykh, Sīdī Abu-l-Ḥasasn ash-Shadhḥulī رحمه الله, was questioned about love and he said, “Love is something granted by Allāh ﷻ to the heart of His Slave which distracts him from everything else other than Him, to the point that you see your lower self inclining to Him, the intellect protecting itself by spiritual knowledge of Him, the spirit rapt in His Presence, the inner secret soul overwhelmed in contemplation of Him. The slave asks for more, and more is given, and he enters into the sweetest of delights of spiritual communion with Him. He is clad in rainment that befits the approach to Him upon the carpet of proximity and he comes into contact with virgin reality and revealed science. For that reason it is said that the *awliyā*^o are the brides of Allāh ﷻ.”

The one who questioned said to the Shaykh رحمه الله, “Now that I have been granted to taste love tell me, what is the drink (*shārb*) of love, what is the the cup (*kā's*) of love, who is the cupbearer (*saqī*), what is the tasting (*dhāwq*), what is the drinking (*shurb*), what is repletion (*riy*), what is intoxication (*sukr*). and what is sobriety (*ṣahw*)?”

He رحمه الله replied, “The drink is the light radiating from the beauty of the Beloved. The cup is the distillation of the subtle essence of the Mercy (*luṭf*) which brings that light into contact with the lips of the heart. The Cupbearer is He who befriends the greatest of the elect and the righteous ones from among His slaves. He is Allāh ﷻ, the One who knows the capacities and affairs of His Friends. If to anyone there is disclosed that Beauty, if he enjoys it for one breath or two, and then the veil is dropped over it, he is a ‘taster’ (*dhawāq*/ذواق) who will yearn for the rest of his life for another ‘taste’.

“If he continues for an hour or more sipping from the cup of love he becomes the ‘drinker’ (*sharāb*/شارب) and if the experience becomes continuous and he drinks until his veins become filled with the treasured lights of Allāh, then that is repletion (*tukhmah*/تخمة).

“Often one becomes unconscious of sense and mental perceptions so that he knows neither what is said nor what he said – that is intoxication (*thamila*/ثمل).

“Sometime the cups circulate among them, states differ, they are turned back from oblivion to remembrance (*dhikr*); mystical states (*ahwāl*) and the statutory injunctions (*furūd*). They are not veiled from the physical attributes in spite of their having drunk as much as they could. That is the time of their sobriety, of the broadening of their mental vision and of the increase of their works. So by the stars of knowledge and the moon of unity they are guided across the night and by the sun of spiritual knowledge they obtain light.”

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ ۖ
أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

raḍiya-llāhu °anhum wa-raḍū °anh: °ula°ika ḥizbu-llāh:
°alā°inna ḥizba-llāhi humu-l-muflihūn

Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him.

Such people are the party of Allāh.

Truly it is the party of Allāh who are successful.

(Sūratu-l-Mujādilah 58:22)

Thus do the lovers get ‘attached’ to the Beloved until they cry out,

“Oh my Beloved! What is life without You?

To live outside of Your Presence

Is to live a life of death. ”



Walking in a dusty lane

Someone calls my Beloved’s Name.

My coat is torn.

Tears betray me — I am totally lost.

At this stage the heart of the lover becomes tender, very pliable and soft. One is now no longer searching for the beloved but is fearful of being cast out or cut off. It is the beginning of what will become an increasing case of helplessness and hopelessness. One knows now beyond a doubt that there is no one and no where — there is only the Beloved, and where ever the Beloved is, is the only place to be, and what ever comes from the Beloved is the only thing of any intrinsic value.

This subtle loving tenderness is known in Arabic as *laṭāfa*, which on the face of things is usually translated as to be kind or to be gentle but also has the following classical Arabic connotations:

to be delicate, refined, elegant, graceful

to be gentle, gracious, courteous, kindly

to be subtle, to know the obscurities of all affairs

to treat with regard for circumstances

to be most soothing and refined in manner

to treat with kindness, goodness, gentleness, benevolence, affection.

The Name of Allāh اللطيف al-Latif or The Most Subtle One, The Inexpressible, Unfathomable, He who knows the delicate meaning of everything; He who creates things most subtly, which cannot be understood by people; and He who gives blessings to people in the most subtle ways, is derived from this root.

One story in the world-famous tale told by Mawlanā Jalālu-d-Dīn Rumī, رحمه الله about Majnūn the mad lover of Laylah. He recounts how Majnūn was found petting a dog. Those who found him doing so berated him saying, “Yā Majnūn, how can you pet that filthy animal, so impure and unclean?”

Majnūn replies, “You see but a picture on the wall. Look further. Spend the night with me and see through my eyes. This is a gift from my Lord, for this is no mere dog. It is the watchdog on the street where Laylah lives.” Another lover said, “When I first entered into the presence of the Beloved I lost sight of this world and the next. Now that my time is spent with the Beloved I have cut my connection with the entire universe.”

The late Shaykh Muzaffar Ozak al-Jerrahi, رحمه الله, wrote, “The life of this world is transitory and fleeting. The greatest investment for the permanent and eternal world is faith and faith alone; it is worship, it is obedience and love for Allāh, exalted is He. We came from Allāh and unto Him shall we return. Therefore those who possess intelligence, conscience and common sense never let it out of their minds for one moment that He is in every way worthy of being loved, that He is the True Beloved. They regard His Service as the true sovereignty and long to be with Him at every breath. They love what He loves and hate what He hates. They blame what He blames and praise what He praises.”

There are those who look on what He has prescribed as a burden, a heavy duty. The people of *lutf*, those penetrated by the pure distillation of the essence of mercy, know that they have been honoured to be admitted into His Presence by His Command. So delicate and tender have they become that the slightest whisper of a command or hint from the Beloved is enough. Where He ﷺ says, “*Proclaim the praise of your Lord in the night and at the declining of the stars,*” (50:40) they then watch and pray through the depths of the night. When He commands, “*Glorify your Lord in the watches of the night.*” (20:130) they hear and they obey chanting the night away. If He says further, “*He who is obedient in the watches of the night prostrating and standing, afraid of the world to come, hoping for the mercy of his Lord,*” (39:9) then you find the lover sunk deep in prostration, bowing before Him, standing in His Presence.

“Oh Allāh Whose tender kindness to His creatures is all prevailing;
Whose goodness reaches every worshipper.
Do not remove us from the circle of tender mercy
and secure us from fear.”

The heart listens, strung on a thread, for whatever it is He has to say. Everything the lover sees, like Majnūn’s dog, reminds him of the One who is loved, the One Beloved. A word, a glance, a smile, a breeze, the twinkle of a star, a summer night street and honeysuckle on the breeze, unseen voices on late night porches, notes from a distant radio, a floating refrain, the blind shaykh wails and

“All these things only remind me of You.”

On Love — على حب

Now does *ʿishq* or ardour comes to possess the soul. Now come the beginnings of the ravishment. In the long hours of the night the heart is slowly emptied and drained of all else but the Beloved.

In the crowd of the beloveds of this world

— and the next —

I gaze at Your Face alone and I am a slave of Your Face alone

I speak not of the Gardens of Eden

nor do I smell the sweet flowers.

I seek only You for there is no one *but* You.

The story is told of the great Shaykh, ʿIbārāhīm bin Adham ؒ who, born a prince, gave up his kingdom to take the Way of Allāh ﷺ.

Once when undertaking ḥajj he made an agreement with one of his travelling companions that if either of them were to witness in the other an act not in accord with ṣhārīʿah, they would bring it to the other's attention.

Upon entering the Holy City of Makkah, may Allāh ﷻ preserve it, they saw a handsome young man. ʿIbārāhīm continued to stare at him and his companion promptly warned him reminding him of their agreement. ʿIbārāhīm replied, "He was my only son and was separated from me while still a youth and I have just seen him now after all these years." His friend said, "Go to him, man." ʿIbārāhīm said, "Nay but I have relinquished him for the sake of Allāh ﷻ and I shall not take back what I gave up for Him," reciting these verses:

For the sake of Your Love I have forsaken this world!

In beholding Thee

I am sore with grief and longing for my wife and children.

But even though every limb of my body be dismembered
Even then, even then would my heart turn to none but You.

Sayyīdah Rābiʿah al-Adwiyya ؒ says,

"There is no sin greater than my existence."

لا إله إلا الله

Love is that flame that when it blazes up
consumes everything but the Beloved.

On Love — على حب

The lover drives home the sword of Not (lāā/لا)
that all others (ʿillaha/إله) might die
other than Allāh (إلا الله).

Hail mighty Love, destroyer of all ‘others’.

One of the lovers of the Face of Allāh who learned the secret of love says, “In a village by the Nile my eyes fell on a beautiful woman. I was shot through by the arrow shaft of her love. My ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ was filled with unremitting hot desire and I pined for my love – days upon end – giving up eating and drinking until my very breath was fire. I noticed then that when I breathed out my breath of fire was met with an other from the sky. I could not understand this until I came to know there was an Other who was my true Beloved on High.”

“The wailing of suffering lovers
is the torch that burns all sin to ashes.”

لا إله إلا الله



To sum up the early stages of love Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jamal says: “Know my beloved, that there are four names for the stations of love (*maqamātu-l-maḥabbah*), passion (*hawa*), which is the falling of love into the heart in its very initial state within the lover. If passion has no association with another beloved and the lover is deprived of his will and comes under the will of the beloved, then passion is called love (*al-ḥubb*). When love (*al-ḥubb*) becomes constant it is called affection (*al-wudd*), and when it embraces the heart and the thoughts and nothing remains it is called passionate longing (*al-ʿishq*). The ʿishq then surrounds the lover’s heart until it blinds the lover from seeing anything but the beloved.”

Love has a hundred forms of pride and disdain,
and is gained by a hundred means of persuasion.
But since Love is loyal, it purchases one who is loyal:
it has no interest in a disloyal companion.

(Rumi)

لا إله إلا الله

The lover never sleeps, can't eat, can't think; is, in short, bereft of all reason and sense, burning one moment and freezing the next. Tears flow only to be followed by waves of painful joy. Merely to catch sight of the Beloved from the corner of one's eye is to lose hours and days. One runs from people, wanting only to be alone with the Beloved. One hides in the back of the houses of prostration (*al-masājid*) counting the endless praises of the Beloved. One lives only to hear the words of the Beloved: be it from the Qāri (reciter of Qur'ān) or the Torch Singer, from a radio in a cafe or the loud-speaker as one passes through the station on the slow midnight train to LaMakān. If one cannot hear the Words of the Beloved any words will do, because everything is You; there is no other Speaker and there are no other words but Yours. Its the Singer not the song.

I don't know where I'm going.

You are the road. You are the map.

But please! Please! Don't go anywhere without me.

“It was evening. After the prayers were complete I left the masjid through the courtyard door rather than the one which opens out into the market. The sky was deep blue; the gold and red all fled. A single star, or was it a planet, hung in the West. The lime trees which bordered the garden surrounding the courtyard were filled with the sweet chittering of tiny birds settling down for the night. From the centre of the courtyard came the splashing of water as some latecomer for the evening prayer completed his ablutions. In the blue light each drop of water was a pearl; a diadem shown forth upon his head; bright luminous sparks fell from his hands. From deep inside the masjid someone was reading Qur'ān and had reached the place where it is written

وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

wa lakinna-llāha ḥabbaba °ilaykumu-l-°imāna
wa zayyanahu fī qulūbikum

“Allāh has made faith beloved by you
and beautified it within your hearts.”

(Sūratu-l-Ḥujarāt 49:7)

My soul flies from my body. The entire universe stands transfigured. Passing into the side street, the people hurrying home through the street were each of them angels. The houses themselves glowed with the light of the souls within them. Tears coursed down my cheeks wetting my beard. I felt I could not draw another breath, live another minute. Just then I hear the song, “I can’t live if living is without You.” and al-°Iraqī says,

“Let me tell you the real story of my Friend.

Everything comes from Him and everything belongs to Him.

His grace shines out from every mote of dust.

The only veil is taking it for granted.”



Once the lover comes to recognize and, even more importantly, know (°arafa) that there is no thing but the Beloved, no thing but Love, for the entire universe is Love it ‘self’ and in reality (ḥaqqiqah) the Beloved is both the Love and the Lover, then at that moment he or she is released from the pervading lie of the secular material world with its myriad subject/object relationships as well as the trap of imagining that love is to be ‘found’ in some place in some one or some thing ‘else’ which has become, through knowledge (ma°rifah), impossible, for there is now not any one or thing else other than Allāh ﷻ; there is neither a ‘who’ nor is there a ‘where’ to find Love, for Love was never lost except in forgetfulness (ghaflah).

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

wa huwa ma°akum °ayna mā kuñtum

and He is with you where you are

(Sūratu-l-Ḥadīd 57:4)

A standard definition of ecstasy (*wajd*/وجد) is, “being outside oneself,” but experientially it is really to be totally “within oneself” or, perhaps, “outside in”.

We touch here on a very delicate point and one which most establishments or organisations, be they religious, political or secular, seek covertly to obscure and overtly to hide.

We would be worse than fools if we did not understand that the religious impulse has everywhere been co-opted by ‘central’ authorities and state terrorists of one form or another (I have referred to this in another essay [*The House of the Spider*] as ‘parallel religion’) who operate under the ‘outer’ forms of ‘religion’ and portray Allāh ﷻ as a jailer rather than as a Lover and by so doing seek to, at least, obfuscate, and, at all costs, to hide from practitioners the message of dynamic spiritual freedom and pure liquid ecstasy which arises from the reciprocated and reciprocating love of the Supreme Being. The reasons for this are not hard to understand. The free lover is just that, Free and a Lover.

Nothing is more threatening to any system of organisation because to ‘be’ Free and to ‘be’ a Lover immersed in ecstasy is to finally ‘be’ beyond postponed and future rewards, the ever vanishing promise of a now that somehow never arrives. It is to ‘be’ beyond both the carrot and the stick and it is definitely to cease being a donkey. To be an ecstatic lover means that there are no enticements, no lures, no place where one ‘must’ go or ‘must not’ go or ‘should’ go or ‘should not’ go other than where one ‘does’ go because one ‘loves’ to and is ‘free’ for in Truth —

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

lā ’ikrāha fi-d-dīn

“there is no coercion in religion”

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:256)

It is, furthermore, to see beyond the ultimate social lie and cultural taboo which is death. This is true especially in the modern secular society which is oriented on the basis of ‘risk aversion’ and which uses death, and the fear of death, and the constant repetition of images of violent and random death as the ultimate means of regulating and ordering people. It is amply manifest in all forms of the media (the collective unconscious of the society) whose main focus of attention and incessant concern is so often, moment by moment, death, be it by war, crime, accident, famine, rape, riot, weather or violence. The latest news is always who died how and how many where, by what and by how, and never who is in love.

On Love — على حب

Unless it be the lewdness the world takes for love, and love is never lewd, and only the Lover knows that death is the ultimate ecstasy.

“Love embraced my spirit before I was born,
it embraced me in the cradle and when I was weaned.

It grew as I grew.

Indeed it shall embrace me on my death bed
for nothing can sunder that embrace.

Love will survive.

My sole visitor in the grave; beneath the stone.”

When Allāh ﷻ loves you He kills in you all but Himself. When He loves you he causes ‘others’ to hate you in order that you may be His alone. To become His Lover is to surely court death, for He is the ultimate and, in truth, the only Killer. So.

فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

fa-tamannaū al-mawta ʾiñ kuñtum ṣādiqīn

“so long for death if you are truthful”

(Sūrau-l-Baqarah 2:94)

Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj ؒ in the Sūq al-Qatīʿah, full of sorrow cries out, “Oh people! Save me from Allāh. Save me from Allāh. Save me from Allāh. He has robbed me of my self and does not return me to my self! I cannot give Him the respect due to His Presence. I am afraid of His forsaking me. He will leave me deserted, forsaken, outlawed! And woe to the one who feels abandoned after having been in the Presence and abandoned after Union! Where am ‘I’ where is ‘He’? What has happened to ‘Me’?”

The people weep for him. He goes on, “I have embraced with my whole being, all Your Love oh my Holiness. You have manifested Yourself so much that it seems to me there is only You and no me. I look to my heart and find no one but You. I do not see estrangement between them and me and only familiarity between You and me.

“Alas, alas. I am in the prison of this life united with the whole human race. Ah You! Ah You! I beg you take me outside of this prison. Will not someone kill me?”

“Oh people, most certainly when He creates His creature it is through pure goodness and if sometimes He shines forth in brilliance before her and sometimes puts a veil before her it is always that she may make progress. For if He did not shine forth everyone would deny His Existence and if He did not veil Himself everyone would be entranced. This is why He makes neither of these states to abide. But as for me there is no longer any veil between Him and me, not even a blink in time; my humanity perishes in His Divinity; my body is consumed in the flames of His Omnipotence—in order that there should not remain behind a trace nor a vestige—neither face nor description.

“Allāh is One. One wrapped in the secret between the two. There is no ‘why?’ but Hū. All forms exist in the atoms of His Divinity. For the flames of spiritual light there are hearths in this creation. For the conscience, secrets that are kept hidden deep within the privacy of hearts of absolute discretion. For being, in the depths of being, there is One who keeps my heart for Himself. My heart which aims at it and chooses it. The science of prophecy is like the lamp of divine light. The fuse of ecstatic inspiration is the burial niche that He has prepared. By Allāh it is the breath of the uncreated Spirit that breathes into my skin each thought and the very one that ʾIsrafil ﷺ shall blow into his trumpet. So is He transfigured before my spirit in order that He may speak.

“If out of all that is in my heart a single atom were thrown on the mountains of the earth they would disintegrate! If on the Day of Resurrection I were to be thrown into the Fire that Fire would be consumed by my burning; and if I were entered into the Garden the dwellings within would crumble. How can the Whole bear my Part?

I am so heavy that the very earth herself cannot bear me.”

“Return to Allāh for the last Dot is His.”

“There is no ‘why’ in this world or the next world
but Him, Oh Him.”

“What is the question? Love is the answer.”



Some, like Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj ؓ, and may Allāh ؓ perfume his resting place and keep fresh his memory in our hearts, are granted their wish and are ‘slain’; others ‘remain’ as His Slaves.

What is enslavement (^{ʿistaʿbād}استعباد) after madness? When al-Ḥallāj ؓ says, “This is why He makes neither of these states to abide,” he points to the compassionate character of the dispensation of the grace of Allāh ؓ in both revealing and hiding Himself. Some, like al-Ḥallāj ؓ, who for a variety of reasons demand to be “removed from the prison”, are spared the life of continuing ‘slavery’; others relish and court slavery living life only to adore the Lord and devoting their lives solely to the Beloved and His wishes with no wish of their own.

Indeed, and there are many of the shining and luminous esoteric personalities who take this position, it can be argued that al-Ḥallāj ؓ, leaving aside his own overriding pre-dilection for the station of the abdāl (substitute or vicarious sac-rifice (ا بدل) rather than the ʿabd (perfect slave or worshipper (عبد), stopped short of what is demanded of the true lover insofar as he still ‘wanted’ something for ‘himself’ (if it can be said there was any longer a ‘he’ that wanted or indeed any ‘he’ who was capable of wanting) rather than surrendering everything, including his ‘desire’ in favour of His Desire which is,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

wa mā khalaqātu-l-jinna wa-l-ʿinsa ʿilla li-yaʿabuduni

“I have not created jinn and humanity other than to worship Me.”

(Sūratu-dḡ-Dḡariyāt 51:56)

In this sense it is to forsake oneself for the sake of Love and to cut one’s ties with all other than Allāh ؓ and in that same sense it is to go beyond the realm of state (*ḥal*) and to arrive at station (*maqām*).

The man of state (*ḥal*) can be likened to a river through which the Love of Allāh ؓ flows; at times this flow is increased to the point where it overflows the banks and floods the surrounding lands.

The person of state (*maqām*) is likened to an ocean. No matter how heavy and abundant the Divine Rain (*ghayṭh*) of Unveiling (*jilwah* جلوة) and Transfiguration (*tajalliyyah* تجلية) the Ocean contains it.

Shaykh Abū-l-Ḥasan aṣḥ-Shādhūlī ؒ says, “These are the people whom Allāh ﷻ has created for His Pure Worship and has purified for faithfulness to His Divine Unicity (*tawḥīdu rubūbīyyah*) and the following of His Revelation. He has pleased them by the secrets of the Lights of His Presence and supported them by the meanings of Spiritual Wisdom and granted them His providential solicitude. He has caused their intelligence to roam in His Vast Sublimity and enlightened the darkness of their selves (*nafs*) by removing from them the oppressive darkness (*dhulm*) of ignorance (*jahl*). He has guided them by the stars of knowledge and the sun of His Spiritual Knowledge. He has consolidated their doctrinal understanding by clear proofs from His Book and Practice. He obliterated their might by establishing the victory of His Desires and concealed their will in the Supremacy of His Will. He has beautified them with the establishment of abstinence and made them to dwell in the condition of reliance. He honoured them with scrupulous concern (*waraʿ*) and the lights of knowledge. He inspired them abundantly and enriched them beyond the need of ‘other’ than Him. He made some of them to be keys to open the hearts of others and flowing springs from which they both give and receive. He has veiled them by Destiny in order that they might become singular in the truth of their secret. You will not know them by their appearance for their inner soul is Truth and outwardly they are invisible due to their being like anyone and no one. Outwardly they are the poor and inwardly they are wealthy. They are the Pure Ones (*al-mukhlisīn*).”

Here it is worth saying some more about the word *Maḥabbah*. It is, as we said, derived from *ḥabba* which is to love and, as we also mentioned, from *ḥabba* which in the verbal form is to seed. It can also be translated as effacement. Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh as-Sakandari ؒ, says, “Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity, for whatever sprouts without having been first buried flowers imperfectly.” Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj ؒ says, “The essence of *maḥabbah* is that you should shake off your many and various qualities and instead find your subsistence in the Beloved alone.” al-Qushayrī ؒ says, “The essence of *maḥabbah* is that you should surrender your entire existence to the Beloved and leave nothing for your self.”

Sahl at-Tustarī ؓ says, “*Maḥabbah* is obedience and forsaking your own needs and wants.” Abū ‘Alī ar-Rūdhbārī ؓ says, “Unless you get out of yourself you cannot enter into *maḥabbah*.”

Those who know, or think they know, Arabic will question our translation of *maḥabbah* as ‘effacement’ preferring the more common understanding of the word which, as we have noted, corresponds more or less to the English word ‘love’.

However the word ‘love’ is by now threadbare from over use (unfortunately as true love is really a very great rarity) and, even worse, abused and debased, we wished to point to a very particular aspect of love which is included within the ‘meaning’ of *maḥabbah*.

Most of us can understand from personal experience how it is possible to be a worshipper, a slave, a devotee, a perfect servant and still, albeit on the most subtle of levels, assert and insert one’s necessarily impure or appetitive self (*nafs*) into the matter. Even to claim ‘slavery’ is to assert oneself and turn the Beloved into ‘other’ and to claim ‘poverty’ (*faqr*) is an insult to the Beloved. That the ‘self’ is impure is not because of any ‘original sin’ but impure simply because at the very end it still remains ‘other’.

Earlier we noted that Rābiyyah al-Adawiyyah ؓ, said, “There is no sin (*dhanb*) greater than my existence.” Thus all the really great lovers (*muḥibbīn*) have known that beyond slavery lay the realm of pure love which could only be entered if one was ‘naked’ of self and that it remained to even the most humble and pure of the slaves to divest their ‘self’ of the garments of self, garment by garment, step by step, layer by layer until one was truly naked and devoid of every ‘thing’ and attribute.

If you want to make love
you better take off your clothes.

It is well known that the last hiding place and ultimate refuge of our arch-enemy Shayṭān “and he is a clear enemy to you” (2:168) is the heart, wherein he whispers his ongoing and never ending tale of delusion which begins, “I am better than he.” (7:12)

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ

‘annā khayrum-minhu

and ends up burning outside the Garden, for “no one with an atom of pride shall enter the Garden” (ḥadīth qudsī). All separation begins with ‘I’ and ends in ‘Thou’. as-Saqī ؑ says, “Love never really exists between two people until the one addresses the other as ‘I’.”

Shaykh ʿAbdu-l-Qadīr Jīlānī, ؑ, says, “Love (*maḥabbah*) is a veil between the lover and the Beloved. When the lover is finally lost in love there is neither lover nor Beloved. There is only Love (*al-wadd*) and Love is all-in-all.”



Allāh stayed. The rest passed.

By Allāh there is no thing but Allāh.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“If you have never trodden the path of love,
go away and fall in love...then come back and see us.”

(Nūru-d-dīn Jāmī)



When one reaches to this understanding one has reached the place of annihilation or *fanāʾ* which, in terms of love, is to die to the limited self. In the realm of the *sharīʿah* it is to refrain from evil and the forbidden and enjoin the good and practice it in one’s life.

In the realm of the *tariqah*, *fanāʾ* is to annihilate (*halaka*) your ‘self’ in the character (ʿ*akḥlaq*) of Allāh ﷻ. In the realm of the *ḥaqiqah* it is to relinquish any claim of the “I” to a separate existence. As such it is to become a total partisan and true friend (*walī*) of Allāh ﷻ.

Here we reach a very delicate point. The question is how can the ‘I’ surrender its limited existence when the very act of surrender is an act of assertion by an ‘other’ being that it exists in the illusion of independence and separateness. This is why Allāh ﷻ says,

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

wa mā yuʾminu ʾakṭharuhum bi-llāhi ʾillā wa hum mushrikūn

And most of them do not believe in Allāh,
without also joining other deities with Him.

(Sūrah Yūsuf 12:106)

Among the Ṣūfīs it has been understood as a coming together of Transparency (*ash-shaffāfiyyah*/الشفافية) and Disappearance (*al-ʾikhtifāʾ*/الاختفاء) and may be found clearly enunciated in the Doctrine of the Cessation of Self-Will or the Dropping of Self Direction. (*ʾisqāṭi-t-tadbīra* /إسقاط التدبير).

Shaykh Ibn ʿAṭāʾ ʾIllāh as-Sakandarī ﷺ addresses this issue at the very beginning of his Book of Wisdom (*Kitāb al-Ḥikām*) (trans. Dr. ʿAbdu-l-Jabbār Danner),

(4)

Rest yourself from self-direction;.

For what Someone Else has carried out on your behalf
you must not yourself undertake to do.

(5)

Your striving for what has already been guaranteed to you
and your remissness in what is demanded of you
are signs of the blurring of your intellect.

(8)

If He opens a door for you, thereby making Himself known,
pay no heed if your deeds do not measure up to this.

For, in truth, He has not opened it for you
but out of desire to make Himself known to you.

Do you not know that He is the One
who presented the knowledge of Himself to you,
whereas you are the one who presented Him with deeds?

What a difference between

what He brings to you and what you present to Him!

Looked at from the realm of the ḥaqīqah we understand this crucial question of the final surrender in accord with the saying of Allāh ﷻ,

ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

dhalika faḍlu-llāhi yuʾtīhi mañy-yashāʾu
wa-llāhu dḥu-l-fadli -l-ʿaḍḥīm

“That is the bounty of Allāh which he bestows on whom He Wills.
And the Bounty of Allāh is without end or limit.”

(Sūratu-l-Jumuʿah 62:4)

Whereas annihilation seen from the realm of *sharī'ah* and *ṭarīqah* is, at least partially, a matter of individual effort, the final surrender of self and one's disappearance from one's self in one's True Self is, we believe, a matter of the bestowal of Divine Grace.

It is a matter of changing one's viewpoint and perspective; it is knowing Who it is who can or does say 'I'. To see Allāh ﷻ through Allāh ﷻ rather than to see Allāh ﷻ through creation. Allāh ﷻ orders the Prophet ﷺ to say,

هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ۖ
وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

hadḥihi sabīlī ʿadʿū ʿila-llāhi ʿalā baṣīratin ʿana wa mani ʿttabaʿanī
wa subḥāna-llāhi wa mā ana mina-l-mushrikīn

“This is my way. I call to Allāh by insight.

I and who ever follows me.

To Allāh is the Glory and I am not from the idolaters. ”

(Sūrah Yūsuf 12:108)

Before touching on the dimension of communion (*wiṣāl*) we must clarify for our readers certain areas of the Qurʾān which may appear inconsistent from the perspective of a rigorous monotheism. Sometimes we hear people ask: “If Allāh ﷻ admonishes us to ‘Say, He (*huwa*), Allāh is One. The Eternal Self-Existant. Neither begetting nor begotten and there is no one who is like Him’ (112:1-4) and then He says, ‘Truly I am Allāh (ʿana) and there is no deity other than ‘I’ (20:14) then why does He also, since He is One, speak of Himself as ‘We’ as in, ‘Truly it is We (*naḥnu*) who have created man and We know what his soul whispers to him and We are closer to him than his jugular vein.’ (50:16) How is it that He is both He and We and I since He is One?

The apparent multiplicity connoted in the use of “We” rises when Allāh ﷻ refers to His many and various attributes (*ṣifah*) and their effects (*afʿal*) or traces (*athār*) which appear in the creation, some of which appear opposed to one another as in ‘The Life Giver’ (*al-yuḥyi*) and ‘The Taker of Life’ (*al-mumīt*) or The Conqueror (*al-qahār*) and The Clement (*al-ḥalīm*), while others of which augment

each other as in The First (*al-ʾāwwal*) and The Last (*al-ʾākhir*) or The Inner (*al-bāṭin*), and the Outer (*aḍḥ-ḍḥāhir*), and others of which compliment as in The Mercy Full (*ar-raḥmān*) and The Bestower of Mercy (*ar-raḥīm*) or The Creator of All (*al-khāliqā*), The Shaper from Nought (*al-bārʾi*), The Former of Images (*al-muṣṣawwir*).

When Allāh ﷻ makes use of the pronouns “He” and “I” it is in reference to external (*ḍḥāhiri*) and internal (*bāṭini*) reality. His inward reality is expressed by *ana* or “I” and His outer reality by *huwa* or “He”. It should also be most clearly understood that his ‘He’ness is not in opposition or in contradistinction to His ‘She’ness or, for that matter, Her ‘His’ness lest we fall in the contemporary trap of what are euphemistically called ‘gender issues’.

Indeed it is only by infinite grace that we can speak of anything at all for at the most basic level of reality, and viewing The Supreme Being in Its most transcendent (*tanzīh*) mode, we cannot speak of anything. To say anything is to limit (by our words or descriptions) that which by nature is Absolutely Unlimited and make contingent the Absolute and quantify That which is quantum to all description and name. Even to use the Name, Allāh ﷻ, which has never referred to any thing or any one other than Allāh ﷻ and has no root but itself is, as Banī ʾIsrāʾīl know, in truth, an act of presumption and audacity, even though in His Mercy (*ar-raḥmah*) He has sanctioned our invocation, lest we be left hopelessly impoverished and bereft of the intimate experience of the Presence. Consider the words of the Sage Lao Tzu as set forth in the Book of the Way:

As for the Way,

the Way that can be spoken of is not the Way

As for the Names,

The Name that can be named is not the constant Name

If we replace Way (Tao) with the word Allāh ﷻ, we might say:

As for Allāh ﷻ,

the Allāh ﷻ that can be spoken of is not really Allāh ﷻ.

As for the Names,

The Name that can be named is not the constant Name

This unquantifiable absolute is referred to in Qurʾān when Allāh ﷻ says, “No thing is like Him.” (42:11) But, because Allāh ﷻ has designated the adherents of his Final Revelation to be “the nation of the middle” or “the nation of the heart” (*ummatañw-wassaṭan*) (2:143), He follows by qualifying that Absolute in saying “He is the Hearer, the Seer” (42:12) thus creating a paradox of interpenetrating Transcendence (*tanzih*) and Immanence (*tashbih*).

This paradox which, when it erupts into time, tears the fabric of space and confers on the temporal the dimension of eternity which allows us the possibility to take another step — closer.



Earlier in this essay we mentioned that falling in love is something quite different than rising in love.

The previous pages which deal with *fanāʾ* or annihilation or disappearance can be understood on a certain level to describe the most positive viewpoint of falling in love where the Lover is finally lost in the Beloved.

I want to be clear here than I am not talking about *shahwah* or lower desires which are mainly physical attraction but *ishq* which is the passionate longing for the Beloved which can only end in annihilation or disappearance of the lover for there is no room for two.

As Shaykh Muḥammad observes, “The self (*nafs*) is the location of passion by its innate nature and passion is the instrument of the self by which it can ascend to higher states by the loftiness of the desire or can be pulled down by the lowliness of the desire. Passion is the will for ecstasy by that which gives one pleasure, so real love is the greatest, most perfect and complete passion.”

But there is a *caveat*, which is that the end of passion is ultimately annihilation or disappearance. This can be seen in the story related in Qurʾān of Mūsā ﷺ asking to ‘see’ Allāh ﷻ:

رَبِّ ارْنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَانِي

qala rabbi ʾarinī ʾandḥur ilayka qala lan tarānī

“Oh my Lord! Show [Yourself] to me, so that I might see You!”

(Sūratu-l-ʿAraf 7:143)

Then Allāh ﷻ tells Mūsā ﷺ,

لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنْ أَنْظِرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنْ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي

lan tarānī wa lakini ʾundḥur ʾila-l-jabali
faʾini ʾistaqarra makānahu fa-sawfa taranī

‘You *will* not see Me, but look at the mountain.
If it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me.’
(Sūratu-l-ʿAraf 7:143)

فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقًا

fa-lammā tajalla rabbuhu li-ljabali
jaʿalahu dakkan wa kḥarra mūsā ṣaʿiqā

But when His Lord unveiled Himself to the mountain,
He crushed it and Musa fell thunderstruck to the ground.
(Sūratu-l-ʿAraf 7:143)

The word here that is of utmost important to understand in context of what we have been speaking of is – *ṣaʿiqā* (صَعِقًا) which sometimes is translated as unconscious but literally describes some one who has been hit by lightning or – in one word – thunderstruck .

This is the *fanāʾ* or the annihilation or disappearance of the subject in the object, the Lover in the Beloved. One simply ceases to be.

What happens next is very important. Allāh ﷻ continues on to say,

فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

falammā ʾafāqa qāla subḥanaka
tubtu ʾilayka wa ʾanā ʾawwalu-l-muʾminīn

And when he regained consciousness he said,
‘Glory be to You! I repent to You and I am the first of the believers!’
(Sūratu-l-ʿAraf 7:143)

Mūsā ﷺ then, through the grace of Allāh ﷻ, is revived, and the secrets of revelation come to him. Only after regaining full consciousness does he attain the sublime state of *baqāʾ* (subsistence) and finally become ready for revelation from Allāh ﷻ. And this is the *baqāʾ* of subsistence or what remains and what abides and what lasts after annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and this is the final stage of the Love. The end of this essay is devoted to this subject, ʾinshāʾ Allāh.

On Love — على حب

First we must understand that revelation or the levels of the various Prophets ﷺ, is, even though Allāh ﷻ says,

لَا تُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ

lā nufarriqu bayna °aḥadim-minhum

there is no difference between any one of them.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:136)

not all the same, given what Allāh ﷻ says of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ,

وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

wa lakin rasūla-llāhi wa khātama-n-nabiyyīn

– but [you are] the Prophet of Allāh and the Seal of the Prophets –

(Sūratu-l-Aḥzāb 33:40)

So unlike many contemporary graphic schemata of revelation, which usually show all the Prophets ﷺ (or religions) on the outer edges of a two-dimensional circle facing Allāh ﷻ at the center, revelation is neither two dimensional nor does it exist on a flat plane. Rather it is four-dimensional, at least, in that exists both in space *and* in time.

So whereas Sayyidinā Mūsā ؑ was thunderstruck (*sa°iqā*) meaning he was annihilated and knocked unconscious by the tajalliyat or unveiling of the presence or power of Allāh ﷻ, Sayyidinā Muḥammad ﷺ had both a qualitatively and quantitatively different experience, as will be evident from what follows from two different Sūrahs.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ
الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

subḥāna-l-ladhī °asrā bi-°abdihi laylam-mina-l-masjidi-l-ḥarāmi °ilā
-l-masjidi-l-°aqṣa-l-ladhī bāraknā hawlahu li-nuriyahu min °ayatīnā;
°innahu huwa-l-s-samī°u-l-baṣīr

Glory to Him who carried His Slave
from the inviolable sanctuary of prostration
to the furthest sanctuary of prostration
— the precincts of which We have blessed —
that We might show him Our Signs
Truly He is the Hearer, the Seer.

(Sūrah Isrā° 17:1)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَى • مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى
وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى • إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى
عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى • ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى • وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى
ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى • فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى
فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَى • مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى
أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى • أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى
وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى • عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى
عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى • إِذْ يَغْشَى السَّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى
مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى • لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى

wa-n-najmi 'idhā hawā – mā ḍalla ṣaḥībukum wa mā ghāwa –
wa mā yanṭiqu 'ani-l-hawā – 'in huwa 'illa wahyun yūhā –
'allamahu shadīdu-l-quwā – dhū mirratin fā-'istawā –
wa huwa bi-l-'ufuqi-l-'a'lā – ṭhumma danā fatadallā –
fakāna qāb qawsayni 'aw 'adna – fa'awḥā 'ilā 'abdihi mā 'awḥā –
mā kadḥaba-l-fu'ādu mā ra'ā – 'afatumārūnahu 'alā mā yarā –
wa-laqad ra'ahu nazlatan 'ukḥrā – 'inda sidrati-l-muntahā –
'indahā jannatu-l-ma'wā – 'idh yaghshā-s-sidrata mā yaghshā –
mā zagḥa-l-baṣaru wa mā tagḥā –
laqad rā'ā miñ 'ayāti rabbihi-l-kubrā

By the shooting star.

Your companion is not astray nor is he deceived.

Nor does he speak out of his own desire.

This is nothing but revelation revealed.

Taught to him by one awe full in power.

Enduring, poised. – At the highest level of vision.

Then he came near, hung, suspended – two bows length or nearer.

He revealed to His Slave what He revealed.

His heart does not lie about what it saw.

On Love — على حب

Will you argue with him about what he saw?
And he saw him another time.
At the Cedar Tree of the Ultimate Frontier.
Near to the Garden of Refuge.
When that which enshrouds did enshroud.
The eye did not swerve nor stray.
In truth he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord.
(Sūratu-n-Najm 53:1-18)



The question we might ask is what did he ﷺ see or who was there to see what?

If we search for *baqā'* (بقاء) in the dictionary we find a number of different meanings which may help us to glimpse the edges of the subject such as survival, existence, subsistence, permanence, endurance, duration, biding, eternal life, continuation of existence, and even immortality.

When Mūsā ؑ was thunderstruck he lost consciousness, which is to say that, at least momentarily, he ceased to be – this is *fanā'*
But in the case of Muḥammad ﷺ, as Allāh ﷻ says,

His heart does not lie in what it saw.
Will you argue with him about what he saw?
And he saw him another time.
At the Lote Tree of the Ultimate Frontier.
Near to the Garden of Refuge.



The eye did not swerve nor stray.
In truth he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord.



In other words, unlike Mūsā ؑ, he was not thunderstruck, he did not lose consciousness and his “eye did not swerve nor did it stray and he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord.”

HE SAW!

That he ﷺ was there and Allāh ﷻ was there simultaneously. Subject and object, the Lover and the Beloved existed in the same time and space. He reached a place where he heard the creaking of the pens used by the angels who are copying from the Preserved Tablet.

It is at that location, beyond the Cedar Tree of the Ultimate Frontier, near to the Garden of Refuge, that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ heard the Kalam of Allāh ﷻ which has neither silence nor interruptions.

So he both saw and he heard and more than that he was able, because his heart did not lie nor did his eye waver, to bring it back to us. What he did no one before or after him has ever done or can do which is why he ﷺ is in truth both the Final Prophet ﷺ and the Seal of all the Prophets ﷺ.

“I then spoke to my Lord ﷻ, saying, ‘When You called the Prophet Mūsā ؑ to come to the Blessed Valley of Ṭuwā (الوَادُ الْمُقَدَّسُ طُوًى) near the mountain of Tur, You ordered him to remove his sandals.’ Again this word came to me from the Divine Person, saying, ‘In My view, you are more cherished and honored than he; Mūsā was My Word (*kalīmullāh*), whereas you are My Beloved (*ḥabībullāh*).’

In total silence and totally alone he watched a man disappear through a veil into the light of the Throne and asked: “Who is this? Is this an angel?” It was said to him, “No!” He then said: “Is it a Prophet?” Again the answer was “No!” He said: “Who is it then?”

The answer was: “This is a man whose tongue was moist with remembrance (*dhikr*) in the world, and his heart was attached to the places of prostration (*masājid*), and he never incurred the curse of his father and mother.”

Then the Prophet ﷺ saw his Lord, the Glorious, the Exalted, and he fell prostrate on the ground, and at that time his Lord spoke to him and said: “Oh Muhammad!” He replied: “At your service, Oh Lord! (في خدمتكم، يا رب)” Allāh ﷻ said: “Ask!”

The Prophet ﷺ spoke:

“You have taken to Yourself ʾIbrāhīm ؑ as a friend, and You have given him an immense kingdom. You have spoken to Mūsā ؑ directly, and have given Dāwūd ؑ an immense kingdom and softened iron and subjected the mountains to him. You have also given Sulaymān ؑ an immense kingdom, and subjected the jinn and men and devils to him, as well as the winds. You have taught ʿĪsā the Torah and the ʾInjīl, and made him heal those born blind and the lepers, and raise up the dead with Your permission, and You have protected him and his mother from the cursed devil so that the devil had no path by which to harm them!

Allāh ﷻ said: “And I have taken *you* to Myself as My beloved.”

Now, oh patient listener, oh patient reader do you understand what a love story this really is? Maybe you thought, “What is the point of all this?” “What does this have to do with love?” “Why is he once again telling the story of the the Night Journey and the Mir^{aj}?” Why again, I thought this was supposed to be about love? Why Because Allāh ﷻ told him, “I have taken *you* to Myself as My beloved.”

Is there a greater love story than this?

He saw what he was supposed to see and for as long as he was intended to see. He was not overbold and unnecessarily inquisitive while he was looking at the greatest signs of his Lord and during this closeness with Allāh ﷻ he was given three great gifts:

He was informed that whosoever recites the *shahādah* (لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله) sincerely will receive paradise by the Grace of Allāh ﷻ and was given the form of the *ṣalāt* (الصلاة) in which Allāh ﷻ also revealed the Fātiḥah and the last two ^{āyāt} of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Through what he ﷺ received and, even more importantly, brought back to us, we were given the means to recreate in our selves his ascension by virtue of the grace (*barakah*) contained within the sacred movements of the *ṣalāt* so that we are able to attain inwardness, thanks to the words and movements of the *ṣalāt*, which are themselves echoes of the inner states of the Prophet ﷺ. Through this form and body movements we gain access to the state of perfect servitude (*‘ubudiyyah*) and nearness to the Divine (*qurb*) which characterize the inner journey of the Prophet ﷺ as the Perfected Human (*al-insānu-l-kamāl*/الإنسان الكامل) to the Divine Presence on that nocturnal ascent (*al-mir‘āj*), which is at once the inner reality of the prayers and the prototype for spiritual realization in ^{al-}Islām.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ • وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ •
فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

kullu man ‘alayhā fān
wayabāqa wajhu rabbika dhū-l-jalali wa-l-ikrām
fabi‘ayyī ‘alā‘i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān

Nothing shall remain but the Face of your Lord of Might and Glory,
Which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

(Sūratu-r-Raḥmān 55:18-20)

As he ﷺ said, “Ṣalāt is the Mir‘āj of a believer,” and through putting it into motion we have the constant daily possibility to reach where he reached and truly become the Beloveds of Allāh ﷻ!

Dhū-l-Nūn Miṣri رحمه الله said, “To Allāh ﷻ belong those worshippers whose hearts He fills with the purity of His Love and expands their spirits with the yearning to see Him ﷻ.”

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jamal comments on this saying, “Glory belongs to the One Who made their souls yearn for Him and brought their understanding closer to Him, and Who caused their hearts to be purified for Him. Glory belongs to the One Who has brought them to a halt in His Presence, entertains them with His Intimacy in their loneliness and heals their dis-ease.”

Oh Allāh, the bodies of the lovers are humbled in their prostration and their hands are raised seeking even more from You. You have let them taste the sweetness of direct understanding and unveiling (*tajaliyyāt*/التجليات) and by that understanding their lives are immersed in goodness. You have made the bliss continue and opened the door of Your Gardens to them. You have allowed their hearts to visit Your Dominions. The love of all those who love is related to You and You Alone are the Cause of the yearning of all those still yearning. The hearts of the knowers (*al-‘arifīn*) have melted for you and the hearts of the truthful ones (*aṣ-ṣiddiqīn*) and the sincere ones (*al-mukhlisīn*) have intimacy (*‘uns*) with You.

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ • ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ

wa huwa-l-ghafūru-l-wadūd – dhū-l-‘arshi-l-majīd

He is the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Loving,

Lord of the Throne of Glory

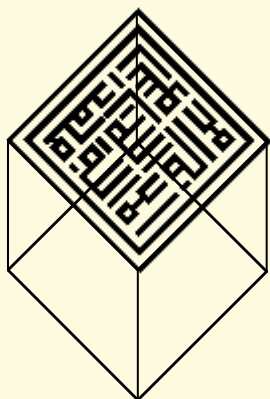
(Sūratu-l-Burūj 86:14-15)

And what is that Throne but the heart of the believer, in accord with the well-known Ḥadīth Qudsī, “Nothing contains My Glory, My Lights, My Manifestations except the heart of the believer, for nothing can contain Me but the heart of the believer.”

قلب المؤمن بيت الرب

qalba-l-mumin baytu-r-rabb

The heart of the believer is the house of Allāh.



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